CHAPTER III

GENERAL SOCIAL LIFE

The preceding chapter dealt with the defeat of the Gurkhas from Simla Hills by the Britishers—a cakewalk as it was not a protracted, long-drawn out war. The Gurkha rulers of the Simla Hills and their armies were remnants of General Thapa's army which had been decisively licked by Maharaja Ranjit Singh and his troops in alliance with the Dogra soldiers of Maharaja Sansar Chand of Kangra.

So, the British established themselves easily in the Simla Hills. In any case, they did not go for any radical surgical change in the existing system of Thakuraies, content to bring about certain minuscule changes in the existing feudatory system, according autonomy to certain Thakuraies including some very small States. Without interfering in the internal affairs in any obtrusive way, they, however, established the rule of law and a respect for governance with the passage of time. The paramount power retained the right of capital punishment with itself and through their Political Agent ensured the Thakuraies' rulers proper behaviour. In lieu of its control, the British Government or the paramount power exacted a certain revenue varying from Thakurai to Thakurai in accordance with their financial position. The paramount power also required from time to time a certain number of begaries for transport for the comfort of their administrative
officers and entourage as well as for official itineraries throughout Simla Hills.

With a new turn in history, which historians emphasise, the social life of the people did not undergo a sudden change. In any case, the establishment of the paramount power could not have brought about any great social change. The Britishers did not disrupt the existing socio-cultural patterns of caste and religion. The British were unlike Spaniards who foisted Christianity with blood and sword on the original natives of Mexico, Latin America South America with the exception of Brazil was conquered by the Portuguese. Both Spain and Portugal, however, allured and used force with proselytizing zeal.

So, the social cultural life of the people of Simla Hills continued uninterrupted and undisrupted as it had been for centuries. Officially, the Simla Hill States peoples were predominantly Hindu with Buddhism operative on the sidelines as it is today in Kinnaur. At this point, we shall throw light on Buddhism before examining the predominant Hindu faith around which the socio-cultural life of the people was organised in pageantry and colour of spectacle and music.

During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the hill society was deeply involved in various finishing their native religion. They were not like Portuguese who imposed through religious beliefs and practices. Regarding the religion and
religious beliefs of the people of Jubbal, Fraser (1815) noticed that they practiced Hinduism, but were overwhelmed by superstitious beliefs and adoration of devis and devtas. Likewise, he found the people of Bushahr and Kumharsain Hindus while the Kinnaur people were Hindus who generally observed the Lama religion as an instance of religio-cultural mixing. All the inhabitants of Bushahr and Kumharsain as well as those near the plains were Hindus. They worshipped the chief Hindu deities, adored and protected the cow, and somewhat blindly followed, according to Frazer, the practices and rites of Hinduism but were Hindus in a different from (which Frazer interpreted as degraded) and were thus of a 'truly ignorant' state, mingling religion with superstitious beliefs. In every village, there were temples of different Hindu divinities, varying from Mahadev or Shiva, to Ganesh, Bhawanee and Kali. However, there was an infinite variety of village deities of their own to whom they played much adoration and their temples were found everywhere. Regarding the religion and religious beliefs of the people in Theog area, Gore (1890) writes: "Indeed the Hinduism of these hill men is sadly unorthodox, for though Hindus in name, and honouring the names of the Hindu divinities, they are practically demon worshippers, whose religion is in proportion to their superstition. The true believer is called upon to put his faith in deos and devis, the divine being, the Rishis and Munis whose good deeds have earned for them a place in heaven, and in
Jognis, the forest fairies and Nag, the serpent god! But it is truly faith without words, for the chief efforts required by their religion in the feeling of the holy man of village, to prevent calling down the worth of the gods upon their many shortcomings. No doubt the priests live here, as often enough elsewhere, upon the ignorance of the people, and the curious processions of deotas at the fairs are all mysteries to work upon the superstition of the unenlightened peasant.\(^2\) Needless to mention that Alexander Gerard (1820-21) has provided a noteworthy description about the religion and religious beliefs followed in Kinnaur in the first quarter of the nineteenth century. He observed that in lower Kinnaur the religion of the mass of the inhabitants was Hinduism, while in upper Kinnaur Lama religion was more predominant. Describing the religion of the Kinnaurees, Alexander Gerard adds that, "the religion of the mass of the inhabitants is Hinduism, but they have no minute distinction of caste. They either burn or bury the dead at some distance from the villages, where they erect grave stones. Some of them prefer the Lama religion, but that properly belongs to the Tartars."\(^3\) Further about the religion of the Tartars of Kinnaur he observed that the religion was Buddhism, and they were very superstitious, paying great regard to lucky and unlucky days. The Lamas in Kinnaur were of three sects: Geloopa, Dookpa and Neengma.\(^4\)

According to Fraser the Kinnaurees were generally considered, Hindus but most of them followed the Lama
religion. The Lama priests were active in that area as no Brahmins had ever reached or settled there.¹

According to Gerard, the Geloopas or Gelookpas were reckoned the highest, since the heads of their religion at Teshu Lambu and Lhasu were of the same sect. They wore yellow cloth garments, and caps of the same colour, both -gelugpas and dugpas went bare headed, the two former did not marry, but there was no restriction on the Neengmas. The Lamas admitted proselytes at all ages, and any person could become a Dooka, Geloopa, or Neengma at his pleasure. They were commonly initiated at the age of 7 to 10. All the Lamas could read and write. In the upper parts of Kinnaur it was common for one person from each house to be educated as a lama.

To come now to the predominant faith of Hinduism, which is essentially pantheistic, henotheistic, pluralistic. The terminology varies according to one's perspective subscribed to by one and all, excluding a small minority of Sikhs, Muslims and Jains.

Hinduism, as practised in the Simla Hills, however, is not that of the main-stream Hinduism as practised in the rest of India. It is not that the inhabitants of Simla Hills did not believe in the cosmic trinity- Brahma, Vishnu, Shiva, it is not that they did not subscribe to Durga, Kali and the related goddess emanating therefrom but the institutionalisation of Hinduism has remained to this day peculiar and unique. They
have the system of village devtas or godlings. The godling is worshipped in a village temple by the devotees. But from time to time, all too frequently, special celebrations take place in the temple precincts where the godling speaks through the gur or malli or diva. Music with played drums, trumpets, karnals, ransinghas, nagaras, bhanas, thalies, etc. is played for the malli for him to come into trance or what is called in sufism hal or waziad. Once the malli is in trance, the devotees of the devta pose their problems to him. The problems, for the most part, pertain to family functioning, altercation and land disputes as well as some iniquity being perpetrated against some weak member/members of the community. The malli oracles in trance, diagnosing the problem, and prescribing certain codes and a shift in conduct. Invariably in course of time the recipient is provided a solution to his/her problems, mitigating misery or at least varied kinds of relief.

Since time immemorial, there has been a steady and perceptible process of humanisation of god. The village gurs are human beings. They eat, drink, walk, live and dance with their worshippers. The deity talks with them face to face. Every village god has a number of ashta-dhatu, golden and silver or brass mohras (masks). One of them is invariably the main and principal mask which emerged in the beginning and represents the devta himself. These mohras are decked in a wooden rath or palanquin which stands already well furnished with coloured silken clothes, ornaments, plants and flowers.
When necessary the deity, in such a position, undertakes an occasionally short or long journey over the shoulders of the worshippers. Baindra of Kotkhai and Mahasu of Simla go to Kedarnath, Badrinath and Haridwar on pilgrimage after a lapse of eight years from their sthana in Kotkhai near Kiari and Jubbal.6

The deities are always accompanied by his goors (disciples) with long hair and one of them is invariably a malegha (head goor). He is the devta's spokesman. At the pertinent moment or on special occasions he gets into trance and in his religious frenzy shakes himself vehemently. It is then, considered that the spirit of the deota has entered him. He is, then considered and addressed as a deota. In that state, whatever he speaks is taken to be the voice of the deity concerned. He gives answers to all sorts of queries.

Local deities are known by different names, such as Mahasu, Maishu, Shirgul, Bijat, Nagas, Narain, Jamlu, etc. The legends relating to gods and goddesses are numerous. They depict their origins and miracles. The stories, in praise of the deities, are sung on special occasions.7

Special feature of the village gods was their feudal form of administration. Every feudal lord had dependent, subordinate feudatories. They owed their allegiance to the higher authority, not only by way of regular homage to it, but also by paying kut i.e., revenue fee for the land assigned to
them. It is, almost, a political hierarchy-baradeo (higher god) at the top, small gudlings as his wazir (ministers) below him, their birs (body guards) still at lower level and the bhors (officials or servants) at the base. For example, Junga was the chief deity of the old Keonthal State. He had five feudatory States. Further below were eighteen tracts of deotas like Kalaur, Manuni, Kaneti, Baldeo, Kawalideo, etc. None of his subordinates could hold a jug without specific permission of Junga devta. Similarly, Chaturmukh of Kotgarh has five chief devatas, namely Benu, Janeru, Khoru, Merelu and Basara. Shirpal is his wazir. The five minor deotas are known as bhors. They work as chowkidars. Khachli Nag is his guru. Usually, the wazirs (ministers) occupy smaller temples adjoining the main temple or even at some distance away from it or in some cases his image is placed near the door.*

The ancient inhabitants of these hill States probably cherished an early form of Shaivism, but it is not known whether the Shiva of Himachal Pradesh was an offshoot from the Indus valley or he was of local origin. The question raised above, however, is only of academic importance. Sometimes, the mainstream devata is adopted locally. The adoption is not made by a Professor of history. It happens. The adopted Shiva, let us say, goes through a period of change and development through folk imagination. Conversely, there is a local cult, indigenous to the areas. In course of time the figure enshrined
in local cult gets linked with the mainstream deity. It is a two way process.

In Himachal Pradesh there are remotely situated caves having Shiva-lingas, which are considered to symbolise the creative power of God. There is no doubt that Shiva has been a popular deity of Himachal Pradesh and has been worshipped not only in the villages but also in the valleys and on the peaks. Shiva is known by many names in Himachal Pradesh. The most popular name is Mahadev. Since ancient times Kinner-Kailash in Kinnaur, Manimahesh in Chamba, Churichandani in Sirmour - Chopal are important centres for pilgrimage.

Closely connected with the worship of Shiva, and far more widely spread, is the Shakti cult. Shakti is known by many names such as Bumi, Maheshwari, Parvati in addition to Durga and Kali, etc. The Goddess is thought to be the benevolent universal mother and protectress of all the living creatures, and is also known as Uma, Devi or Parvati. There is, however, another more violent aspect to her character, which is indicated by names such as Kali, Durga and Mahishasurmardini. The Shitla, the goddess of smallpox, ad other goddess of disease are also the manifestation of the same goddess, Mahadevi, the great goddess, Maharani, the great queen and Devi Maior Devi Mata, the goddess mother. The important places of Devi worship are Hatkoti in Jubbal,
Bhimakali at Sarahan in Rampur Bushahr, Chandika Devi at Kothi and Usha at Nichar in Kinnaur. Outside Simla Hills there is Ambika at Nirmand and Naina Devi in Bilaspur.

According to a local legend, the great battle between the Shakti Mata Durga and Mahishsura took place near Bilaspur in Himachal Pradesh and after slaying the fearful demon, Durga threw his head in a nearby Brahm Kapali Kund on shravan ashtami i.e., eighth of the bright-half of Shravan month. A great fair takes place every year in Naina Devi temple, where she first appeared. Nearby, at the Kali temple in Pangana a buffalo-bull used to be slain every year on the 8th day of Navaratra actually symbolizing the slaughtering of the demon Mahishasur.

Simla Hill was one of the principal centres of serpent worship in India. The cult of Nagas goes back to the ancient times in western Himalayas and undoubtedly it is one of the indigenous cults of the area. Nagas have a large number of worshippers. Their shrines are numerous, and there are also Nagani (female Naga) shrines, but the latter are not so common. The image in these shrines is usually of stone in human form with the figure of snake entwined around it and a serpent canopy rising over the head. The shrine also contains figures of snakes in stone, wood and iron. Water springs are believed to be under the control of the snake godlings. Many
Naga godlings are believed to have the power to grant rain and in times of drought are diligently propitiated.

Before the British period, the village devtas had all spiritual and temporal authority. They were vested with all powers, and there was absolutely no necessity of a court or a judicial system. Every problem of an individual or of the society as a whole, was decided by the verdict of the devta. Even during British rule or in free India today, civil and revenue cases pending in the court could only be decided by resorting to the old tradition.

Hinduism as it is practised in the institution of Gaon Devta is participatory, communitarian, psychological and cultural in the widest and the deepest sense. Unfortunately, today, participative Hinduism is beginning to be eroded in a very significant way by the incursion and invasion of mainstream Hinduism and the aggressive diffusion of outside sects, e.g. the Sai and Radhasoami cults. Urbanisation and considerable shrinkage of the malli base, decrease of vocal and instrumental musicians of the toori class- now turning to other professions as the traditional professions are not sufficiently remunerative-are great contributing factors as well.
Family Structure and Inheritance of Property

Joint family system

The joint family system was the common family unit. This was approved by social tradition. In such families parents lived with their married or unmarried sons. It had been seen in these Hill States that as long as only the eldest son was married, they lived together. But when the sons got married or the parents died, the family disintegrated and in the event of sub-division, the property was divided equally. The eldest male was the head of the family. He supervised and regulated family affairs. He commanded great respect among the members of the family and everybody obeyed him.

Houses

Simla Hill States houses were designed on a traditional basis. Village houses were made of stone and timber. No lime, sand and water was used for joining stone or bricks. Houses were double or three storied.

"All the houses were floored with planks thus procured and the woodwork of their balconies with every piece of flat timber in use, costs them this exercise of labour and loss of time and of material."
**Occupation**

The main occupation of the people of Hill States was agriculture, with ninety four percent of the population dependent on it. The best lands were, however, with the rulers while most of the farmers had to be content with patches.

**Food and drinks**

People of these Hill States took their meals thrice a day. The staple food of villagers was Barley Sattu. Barley was taken from April to October. Rice and Maize were consumed during winter. Besides millets like Koda, Chulaie, Kawani, Bajra, Ogla, Bathoo, China were also in the menu.

Rice was boiled and taken with pulse or vegetables. Kawani and Cheens grains were cooked as rice and balls made of it. They were greatly relished with whey. Koda and Cholai were mixed and grounded to flour, their roti known as Chaloti.

**Pulses**

Mash, Masar, Moong and Chana were the kind of pulses cooked by boiling in water.
Vegetables

Vegetables were eaten more during the monsoon when seasonal vegetables were grown.

Special dishes

Sidoo, Patandey, Poldu, Badey, Shakdi, Sattu, Kheer, Halwa were a number of special dishes to be prepared on festive occasions.\(^{20}\)

Wine

Description of food habits will remain incomplete without referring to wine. Wine was taken by almost every elderly person in each family. The common wine was a local one made from Futra and Koda grains. The people were so addicted to wine that the local production could not meet their requirement. A country wine liquor vend, locally called thair, existed in some villages.\(^{21}\) In the Koti State no festival was complete without wine. The Puja of goddess Chandika was incomplete unless accompanied by an offering of wine and it was wine again that was given as charnamrit to the devotee of the goddess.\(^{22}\)
Smoking

Smoking was fairly widely prevalent among the people of Simla Hill States. Men smoked hukka or cigarettes. Among women only old ones were habitual smokers.²¹

The people were so fond of smoking that during travel they carried their smoking device along with them. If they did not have any hukka or cigarettes or bidis, they carried a pouch full of tobacco. When they wanted to smoke they, dug two holes in the ground and covered these two holes with mud. In one of the holes they placed tobacco and burning embers and inhaled from the hole at the other end lying flat on the ground.²⁴

Clothing

The clothing of the people of Simla Hill States was essentially the product of the climatic condition of the region. Those living in a warm climate required little or no clothing, while those living in a cold region needed heavy protective garments.²⁵ People of these States dressed up simply and mostly in homemade woollens in winters and cheap cotton in summers.²⁶
Male Clothing

**Tota**: It is a famous Bushahri cap. It is a woollen cap with the velvet portion of a cloth turned upwards. The flap was let down in cold weather to protect the ears. In Kinnaur the head dress for men and women was the same woollen cap called the pang in the local dialect. 27

**Kurta**: It was a cotton shirt with or without collars and a pocket on the above left side of the chest.

**Sadris**: Sadris were of cotton or woollen cloth. This was like a waist coat worn during winter and summer. 28

**Band-Gale-ka-coat**: Buttoned up woollen coats worn in winter.

**Achkan**: Older men prefer to wear long coats. In some States it was called Jurkhi. These were made of cotton, woollen and of Khaddar cloth.

**Pyjama**: Rebdar and churidar Pyjamas were almost similar with the only difference that the latter was tighter below the knees. 29 On the occasion of marriages, a specially embroidered Chhuba of white colour was prepared. This dress was worn by the bridegroom
Chhuba-Gala: Its borders were embroidered with different colours.

Buraka Pared: This was a special type of Gachang of silken fabric and fine texture.

Tepang: The tepang with which the bridegroom was adorned was different from the one commonly used by villagers. It was a black round cap.

Takase-Nayanlukh: This was a white woollen chadar with cross, i.e. embroidered checks of different colours.

Takose-Suthan: This was a tight woollen churidar suthan with coloured checks and other design on the lower portion down knees.

Gulmeta: This was a special type of muffler woven in different designs and colours.

Takose Chukh: These were woollen shoes with coloured designs.

Women’s Clothing

Dhattoo: Women of these Hill States wore two types of Dhattoo as head-dress. The first type and the most traditional one was made of two parts. The first part was called topi, a round cap about nine inches in diameter. The second kind was the talla, a large white piece of cloth folded over four times.
The topi was put on and then tala was wrapped round the head tied to one side, the smooth side falling over the forehead. This appears to be a peculiar head dress.

**Kurta**: It was a cotton shirt called jumper. A gray miletia cloth was quite commonly used for kurta.

**Sadri**: During winter, few women used woollen waist-coats inside the Jurkhi, it being called sadri.

**Jurkhi**: It was a woollen achkan. Sometimes it had upturned sleeves with red silk lining and hem. During summer, cotton jurkhis were used.

**Gochhi**: Women wrapped a piece of cotton called Gochhi, about fifteen feet long, a shade of mauve colour, around their waist.

**Suthan**: It was a woollen Pyjama of gray or brown shades.

**Salwar**: Some young women put on cotton salwar.

**Rebdar Suthan**: It was a cotton pyjama, tight at the bottom.

**Othroom**: Old women wear traditional woollen half pyjama upto the knees.
Ceremonial Dress

There was a slight difference in the ceremonial dress. During fairs and festivals, the most liked colours among women were black, yellow or pink.31

James Baillie Fraser wrote "On crossing the Bisharee Nullah we observed that the dress of the inhabitants was completely changed, and their appearance somewhat altered. Instead of the dirty cotton cap and gown of Sirmour they wore a black cap of shaggy wool, somewhat like a highland bonnet compressed; a pair of trousers of thick dark stripped woollen stuff, very loose from the waistband, where it is tied with a string to the knees, but it becomes closer to the leg below, and reaches to the heels in small wrinkles. Their chief garment is a coat of similar blanket stuff, which reaches down to the knees gathered tight round the waist, and falling round the lower parts and thing in many folds, somewhat like the scotch highland philibeg. The better sort usually wear a piece of cotton, much as the Hindus wear the doputta, and frequently wrap it round the shoulders as a plaid. Their shoes were formed of a soot of close net-work, or twill of woollen thread attached to a leather sole."32
Ornaments

Among the people of Hill States even husbands like wives used to possess important items of ornaments to be used on fairs, festivals or during ceremonies. They felt crestfallen if their wives did not possess a few. Sometimes they took the step of mortgaging their land or landing themselves into debt. In these States the Kolis were not allowed to put on gold ornaments.33

Women had an instinctive fondness for a variety of ornaments. The ladies of the swarn or upper castes used gold ornaments, whereas those of lower castes were content with silver ones. The traditional ornaments used to be heavy and more lavish.

People of Simla Hill States invested a large part of income in the ornaments because they utilized them at the time of emergency by selling them.34

Ornaments for the Head

Chak: This was a hollow-cup-shaped gold/silver ornament with different floral motifs used by married women, weighing about 100 grams.

Shangdi and Tikka: These were silver bends for the forehead with a small silver-carved disc which fell on the forehead. The
disc, called Tikka, was studded with five meenakaris of blue or green colours over it. In some States it was called Dora.\textsuperscript{35}

\textbf{Junti}: It was a long attractive silver ornament used on hair plaits.

\textbf{Linzoo}: These were long silver stripped ornaments used on the head. One clip was fixed to the head and the other two ends fixed to the two ears.

\textbf{Ornaments for the ears}

\textbf{Mungri}: This was a thin gold or silver wire circled together to about 2 inches diameter with a hook for the earlobe, a favourite among the old women.\textsuperscript{36}

\textbf{Phool}: This was an ornament made of thin silver leaves pinned to the hair and spread over the ears. This had become a jewel of the past.\textsuperscript{37}

\textbf{Dandia}: These were small earrings made of gold or silver, for earlobes, numbering twelve or more at the upper portion, worn by elderly women.\textsuperscript{38}

\textbf{Kantali}: These were round thin silver ornament, for the upper parts of the ears.

\textbf{Kantey}: This was a common silver or gold ornament used by women.
Ornaments for the wrists

Kangnu: This was a thick bracelet of silver weighing 100 to 120 grammes. In some States it was called Dhugley.

Churian: Churian were of gold and silver. ³³

Gajra: These were flexible bracelets made of silver. A gajra weighed 100 grams.

Dhagley: These were silver bangles. ⁴⁰

Ornaments for the Fingers

Guthi: This was a plain ring studded with a coloured stone, made of silver or gold in varied designs.

Arsi: This was a large silver ring which sometimes had a small mirror fixed to it. ⁴¹

Dharotu and Kodolu were also the ear ornaments used by women. ⁴²

Ornaments for the Nose

Balu: It was a large nose ring made of gold.

Bulak: Bulak was a bigger nose ring and was worn through the hole in the cartilage, in between the nostrils.
Long: It was a gold ornament, button shaped, worn on the right side of the nose.

Tilli: The smallest form of long may have a few tiny beads used by the married women.

Ornaments for the Neck

Kanthi: This was a locket of bristling brass, gold or silver. Kanthi, made of brass, were purchased from the market but gold and silver Kanthies were made on order by the goldsmiths.

Kach: This was a silver or gold necklace.

Dorg: This was a large necklace (haar) of silver rupees and small precious stones. It was hung from the neck right down to the breasts.

Champakali: This was a necklace of silver bearing pendants which looked like bands of champa flowers.

Chandar Haar: It was a heavy silver necklace.

Hansli: It was also known as Tandiri. This was made of silver. Old women use this ornament.

Jantar: A small hollow rectangular silver casket having crude carving of local deities tied round the neck.
Ornaments for the Toes

Polries: This was a flat silver ring worn on the toes of the feet just by the ladies.

Ornaments for the Ankles

Paizeb: A silver band weighing about 200 grams and worn round the ankle.

Some of the ornaments, e.g. Koka and Tilli, (earrings and rings worn on the fingers) were used daily, while others were reserved for marriages or other festive occasions. A woman would remove ornaments of nose and ears only when some male member of the family died and put them on again after the kirya."

Dress Ornaments

Digra: This was a decorative silver sari-clip-cum-sari-pin used by the women to hold the two ends of chhanti.

Tumuch: This was another type of silver ornament used for binding the two ends of a Dhori near the left shoulder."
Birth, Marriages and Death Customs

Birth Customs

Birth customs in Hill States were simple. No prenatal ceremony was performed. The expectant mother led a normal life, but was not allowed to carry heavy loads nor exert herself very much otherwise.  

Delivery

Delivery took place in the ground floor and was helped by an elderly woman (performing, naturally, the role of a midwife or dai), well versed in handling such cases. After the delivery, the mother was given hot ghee and milk for nourishment.

If a son was born there was great joy. Guns were fired. Jaggery was distributed among those present and friends. The happy news was sent to relatives. The midwife, if engaged, got Rs. 5/- and a piece of cloth. The neighbourhood woman assisting in the delivery, was given Re. 1/- and grains.

Days of Birth Purification

Before bringing the mother to pand, she was given a spoonful mixture of ghee, milk and the cow's urine gonch. This mixture was sprinkled in the pand with the twigs of bikri
shrub. The mother and child were confined to pand for 15 days. After this they were taken to the upper storey, where she was given a spoonful of the same mixture. This was sprinkled all over the house as shuddhi. If some relative or a pandit happened to visit the family during days of impurity, no meals were served to him from the family kitchen for the first three days. The meals were supplied to him from a kitchen in a separate house. Even the family devta was not worshipped for the first three days. 52

The diet of the mother

The diet of the mother for a month was simple i.e., easily digestible as per her constitution. This consists of bari, rich in ghee and overboiled rice. The poor families used mustard oil in place of ghee and the sturdy women digested it. The rich families had by then giving soonth, cooked in pure desi ghee to the mother. 53

Koti-ki-Juriki

After birth, the child was wrapped in a piece of cloth for two or three days. Then the child was dressed in small home stitched clothes known as koti-ki-jurki. 54
Nam Karan

The child's name was either given by the family priest or by the eldest member of the family. It was usually given any day after nine months or one year.

Bandejh

On the advice of the priest, the parents used to make a promise to the family deity for the long-life of the child. This was known as bandejh.

Anna Prashni

When the child was about 8-9 months old, solid food was given to the child for the first time. Earlier, the child was fed on breast and cow's milk. On this day a hawan was performed by the priest. The child lay in the mother's lap and with the aid of a one rupee silver coin, kheer was touched to the tongue. A thread was tied to the wrist of the male child. This was knows as Dhali.55

Mundan ceremony

The child's hair were cut after one or three years of birth. The household on a particular day held a simple
ceremony in which friends and neighbours participated. The barber was called to shave the head of the boy. The hair were collected in a basket and the parents offered incense. This basket was carried away and buried in the ground. Jaggery pieces were distributed among the gathering. The barber was given Rs. 1.50.

Janeo

This was a sacred thread worn just by Rajputs and Brahmins. The priest gave an auspicious date and a simple ceremony was held. Guru mantra was whispered into the boy's ears during the thread ceremony. The priest was given almost or about Rs. 5/- and some grains, while a feast was given in the afternoon.

Piercing of ears and nose

A girl's ears and nose were pierced when she was about four years old. This was done with a needle or thorn.

Superstitions

There were certain superstitions about birth customs. If a child always kept crying or remained inactive, the family devta was consulted. Prayers were held so that the child may get rid
of all evil spirits called dak or dani. In some cases the family Pandit was also consulted, who gave a charmed thread to be tied round the neck or forearm of the child. If a woman constantly lost her child, the devta was consulted through oracle. Whatever the devta directed, was performed by the family. The devta was given some grains and five rupees. In some cases the Pandit charmed either a mole on the woman or some other mark on her body. After this, the woman began to bear children that lived.\textsuperscript{58}

Marriages

The study of marriage customs of a society renders deep insight into the social as well as cultural organisation of that society. Patriarchal society has a different impact on the economy than the matriarchal. The bride price, gifts, dowry and other exchanges on this occasion effect redistribution of wealth and resources and, thus, by affecting the vital organs of the economy, bring about change in the economic status of the social unit. Nevertheless, the basic fact remains that marriage or matrimonial alliance is the fundamental basis of social existence. A study of marriage customs in Simla Hill States would not only throw light on the hill society, but would also help in establishing a link between their present and their prehistoric ancestral society.
In Kinnaur, marriage by negotiation was known as Janekana or Janetang marriage. Under this form, the father of the boy looks for a suitable match for his son. In many cases three girls were considered for this purpose. With three different flowers, one each for each girl, the father went to the village deity for final approval. The devta approved one girl. The names and addresses of the other two girls were never made public. This practice is now limited only to extremely orthodox families.

In other cases, a particular girl was selected for this purpose. If the girl's parents showed an affirmative inclination, two middlemen, called majomis in local usage were made to approach the parents of the would-be bride. In Kinnaur, the maternal uncle of the bridegroom played a major role in matrimonial alliances, therefore, making him invariably a majomi.

The go-between or middlemen of the girls parents presented a bottle of liquor and some cash (generally five to ten rupees) as a token in case the girl's parents agreed to the proposed marriage. The bottle of liquor was essentially capped with butter, it being considered a sign of a happy wedded life, prosperity and good luck throughout Kinnaur. When the bargain was struck, a gold ornament was presented to the girl's side as barni which binds the parents to a promise. On this occasion, there was a feast for the middlemen, consisting of
and sumptuous food. Subsequently, the marriage date was set in consultation with the Lama or good grokch. During Phaguli celebrations, the boy's father sent pottu to the girl's parents. This was known as phaguli banta. Similarly, during the month of Magh a he-goat was slaughtered and its intestines were sent to the girl's parents as a special gift called chharmi banta of chharmig.

Darosh dub means to waylay or drag forcefully (darosh). In the days when primitivism prevailed, forceful capture of a female, where the man would take her to his cave or dwelling was a practise for sexual relations, marriage being no part of it. Our mythological literature speaks of Rakshasas who did the same thing on many occasions. So greatly, in fact, that at a later stage matrimony achieved this way came to be known as 'Rakshasa Vivah', i.e. demonic marriage. Nonetheless, it cannot be called marriage in the strict sense of the word. It was largely a primitive tradition which still yet links various stages between primitive man and modern man. In these hill States, it was just a tradition, with the Kanuras at the time, but later with the passage of time it came to be recognised as a form of marriage.59

The following three types of marriages were prevalent in these hill states. These were :

(i) Marriage by negotiation

(ii) Badni
(iii) Reet

Marriage by negotiation was the most accepted. Marriage proposals were initiated by the boy's parents. A middleman, usually the relative of the girl, conveyed the proposal to the parents of the girl. He made an informal agreement with the girl's father. Apart from the family status, caste and economic factors played a greater role in deciding the relationship. There was too great an emphasis on horoscopes.

Betrothal

After an informal agreement between both the parties, a simple engagement ceremony was held at the girl's parents house. This was done in the presence of relatives. This ceremony was held according to the time worked out by the family purohit. The boys parents sent kares, or langlesa ring and clothes to the betrothed thereby sealing an obligation for both the parties to honour their words. Betrothal took place even when the boy and girl were minors. The marriage was held when the boy and the girl came of a marriageable age. Marriage was held on an auspicious date worked out by the astrologer. It was done many months earlier when both parties agreed to the proposal.\(^6\)
Marriage preparations

As the marriage date drew near, preparations began. There was a great hustle and bustle in the respective homes. Houses were white washed. New clothes were stitched for everybody in the family. A couple of weeks earlier, collection of dham material began in right earnest. Ornaments for the bride were prepared by the boy's side. A langnotri was prepared by the purohit. This served as a guide to perform the right ritual at the right time.

Tel Batna

Three, five or seven days earlier 'Tel Batna' ceremony was held on both sides performed by sisters and other members of the family. The Purohit attended to many other rituals like 'Kalash Sthapan' 'Ganesh Puja'. Oil was put on the head of the bridegroom with Druba. Batna was applied on the body of the groom before he took his bath.³¹

Shanti

After 'Tel Batna', 'Shanti' was performed, along with Hawan and Navagranthi Pujan. The marriage feasts began from the day of 'Shanti'. Relatives brought cooked food and flour. The maternal uncle of the boy participated, spending large
amounts. He arranged the feast and bore the expenses. Clothes were also given by him to the boy. Shehara Bandi was done strictly according to the time worked out by the Purohit. The groom then put on the best of his clothes. Kangan of a mouli, cowrie shell, an iron ring and a pierced piece of supari was tied round the wrist.

Yarivatra

The marriage party consisted of 50 to 100 people who were the brethren, relatives and friends of the groom's side. The bridegroom was taken in a palanquin which was carried by four persons. These carriers belonged to scheduled castes.

At the Bride's House

As the marriage party approached near the bride's house, the marriage party was accorded a warm welcome and led to a separate house where the seating arrangement was ready.

Lagan

At the appointed hour, the bridegroom was taken to the mandap, accompanied by his father, purohit and members of the marriage party. Women sang marriage songs befitting the occasion. The purohit and the bridegroom sat close to each
other. A havan kund was placed in the centre of the vedi. A red cloth was tied from four sides and the vedi was decorated with flowers, pipal leaves and buntings. The bride was brought to the vedi a little later and sat close to the groom with her face veiled. A long thin piece of cloth was tied round the bride's waist. The other end of the cloth was tied to the bridegroom's. While all this was ongoing, women mostly sang marriage songs and the village bajantries did their bit at short intervals. Kanyadan was invariably done by the parents of the girl. 64

**Pheras**

Now it was time for the pheras - the irrevocable seven steps. The bride and the groom were required to go round the sacred fire seven times. Three rounds were taken when the havan was lit and after a short interval three were repeated. In the sixth round the bride led the groom, they being tied together with a cloth, but in the seventh and the last round she follows the groom and thus becomes his ardhangni or better half forever. 65

**Shayadan**

The dowry items consisted of a charpoy, beddings, utensils and clothes.
Bidai

The departure of the barat was a touching scene. The near ones of the bride were seen fussing around her. Many among them, especially the women wept. Then she was carried to Dola. The musicians led the marriage procession. The departing songs were so full of pathos that every eye had a touch of sentiment, emotion and sadness.

When the bride and the groom reached their home they were affectionately received.

Teeka

Friends and relatives offered a teeka to the groom. The amount of teeka was not standard and could vary. It depended entirely on the closeness of the relations and friends.

Jal-Yatra

The bride was taken to the bowli by the maternal uncle of the bridegroom. She was also taken to the water source in a procession attended by the boy's aunts.
Kewalti Sbana

On the next day of the marriage, Kewalti-Kali plants along with banana branches and pipal leaves were taken to the water source along with the couple.

Daronja

The return of the bride to her parents was called 'Daronja'. It was done on the third day of Vadhu Pravesh. The bride accompanied by her husband visited her parents house.

The hill marriage, the ritualisation preparatory, in the course of its performance and port-marriage is not different from the traditional hindu marriage but for minor variations in the enactment. The symbology of the hill marriage perhaps should be unravelled in semiotic perspective by future scholars. The semiotic studies on cultural 'texts' have been done in the Department of Anthropological Linguistic at Punjabi University, Patiala and at Jawaharlal University. The French perspective has been inaugurated and carried out by Professor H. S. Gill. It must, however, be pointed out that ordinary people participate in the rituals, viscerally, as it were. On this point one is reminded of carl jung who when urged to explain the archetypes to Indians snapped that the latter lived the archetypes. A pointed intention of it is made by Miguel serrano in Hse and Jung.
Badani

Another kind of marriage was 'Badani'. In such, rituals were not observed in great detail as in the case of a regular marriage. The bridegroom did not go the bride house. She was brought by 3 or 4 persons. An arati of seven earthen lamps was lit. Six lamps were oiled, but the seventh, in the centre, was filled with ghee. The 'arai' was taken before the bride and the groom. The family purohit was invited to perform a brief ceremony.

Reet

The last type of marriage was known as 'reet' or 'dheri'. In reet, if a woman disliked her husband, she was at liberty to marry another person of her choice. The second husband had to pay some compensation to the first one. The amount was mutually agreed upon in the presence of a few relatives. This was known as reet or dherilena. The reet institution in its positive and negative aspects has been dealt in depth and detail in the subsequent chapter.
Death Ceremonies

Birth, love, and death are fundamental realities. So the transition from marriage to death should not be viewed as dismal.

Age-old customs die hard and more particularly in the countryside where change is very gradual. The disposal of a corpse was a very elaborate and extremely tedious practice, performed according to the complexity observed in Hindu society. The corpses were cremated, whereas those of children below 2½ years were buried on the banks of the river. There was a separate cremation ground for different castes, though the rites were practically the same. No custom of floating corpses in the river existed. The corpse was taken in a procession in which the entire community participated and paid their last respects. Relatives and friends assembled on the occasion and followed the procession which was led by the village Turis who played narsinghas, nigaras and trumpets. ⁶⁸

Period of mourning

The period of mourning lasted about 13 to 16 days, but it was observed for a whole year in the house where death had taken place. Among the Dumnas, Rehars and Turis, the period of mourning was of three days. When a person was dying, he was laid on the ground, and the head was kept towards the
north. Generally, the people were lifted from the charpoy and placed on the floor before death. But even if he or she happened to be lying on the bed at the time of death, the body was immediately removed and laid on the ground. It was considered inauspicious to die on a charpoy. The moment the person breathed his last, panchrata gold, copper, silver, moonga and ganga jal was poured into his mouth to ensure a better life afterwards. A lamp was lit at the time of death and vigil was kept there for nine days. Before taking the body to the cremation grounds, it was bathed either in cold or lukewarm water. An arthi was prepared by the Dumnas. Coffin cloth of two colours of white and red were used, indigenously known as dhoa and masruh. The white coffin cloth was spread out on the arthi and the red one was used to cover the corpse.

Pind Dan

The first pind dan was performed in the house when the arthi was lifted to be carried to the cremation grounds. The pinds were given to the Brahmins-in-charge continuously for 11 days, the number of pinds increasing proportionately till it reached eleven on the final day. Coins were also thrown over the body when it was being carried to the cremation grounds. The funeral pyre was then prepared with firewood, and the corpse was placed on it. Some ghee was then sprinkled and the pyre was lit generally by the eldest son. When part of the body
was consumed by the flames. Kapal Kriya was performed by the eldest son.

Immersion of Ashes at Hardwar

A very important rite was the immersion of ashes, which were carried to Hardwar by the eldest son, or, in his absence, by some other individual. There, a series of rituals were conducted by the Panda.

Chobarkh

This was the 4th death anniversary Brahmins were given a feast and they were given household articles by way of charity in the name of the deceased.

Social life in a traditional society is many-layered. It is determined not merely by occupation, dress and ornament, but by immemorial rituals governing birth, marriage, and death participation therein by the community. This chapter therefore has focused on the varied component the chapter following it will present the changes which took place in hill society with the advent of modernity. The two chapters together afford a rounded picture of Simla Hill States.
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